DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 057 061 TE 002 698

AUTHOR Copeland, Evelyn M.
TITLE What Can You Say About JIINT?
PUB DATE Sep 71
NOTE 6p.
JOURNAL CIT NEATE Leaflet; v70 n3 p22-27 September 1971

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Composition (Literary); *Creative Writing; *Elementary School Students; Hypothesis Testing; Individual Differences; *Motivation Techniques; *Primary Grades; Problem Solving; Student Motivation; Writing Skills

ABSTRACT

The hypothesis discussed in this article is that positive attention to the creative process with ample opportunity to write and tell stories and ideas will result in more competency in the skills of writing - and considerable more success and joy in the art of writing - than will the teaching of the skills per se in the early years. To nurture creativity in writing, the teacher of the primary grades must create situations in which each child can succeed in some respect, pose problems in which the challenges will allow for individuality, and talk with the child about what the child is talking about. For example, after a class has visited the zoo, each child could then do a take-off on an imaginary animal. (CK)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

NEATE Leaflet, Vol. 70, No. 3, September 1971.

ED057061

WHAT CAN YOU SAY ABOUT *JIINT*?

by EVELYN M. COPELAND

Some people distinguish between two kinds of writing. The first, they say, explains what is; the second imagines what might be. The first tells; the second shows. The first helps the reader or listener to understand; the second helps the reader or listener to experience. The first they call expository; the second creative. But both kinds of writing are creative, and neither one excludes the other. The essential thing in the primary grades — and I suspect much later — is not whether writing explains or imagines but that it spring from what the child feels, thinks, imagines and wonders about things. I use *spring* here in the sense of a well-spring, a source of continual supply. The creative, composing process when continually drawn upon should lead to self-discovery, ease in expression and all the attendant benefits of the creative force at work within one. Let these, then, be our goals in having children write, not categories or other external conventions.

In response to the question, "What are people for?" a second-grader *explains*:

"What Are People For"

people are for viseting and loving.
they are for living. they are for
going to diferent countreyes
The End

TE 000 698

Asked what kind of adventures Humpty Dumpty and Teddy Bear might have, Randy *imagines*:

One day Hupdy dubby was a sietest and
ted went in his medsin cabbet and ted
drak up al the magic poshin and he t-
irned smaller but then they got him
back to his sies agen The end

Kathy *explains* with *imagination* when she is asked what she is good at:

Evelyn Copeland is consultant for English in the Fairfield, Connecticut, Public Schools.

Copyright 1971 by the New England Association of Teachers of English.

Im veryvery good swimmer and I cude stay under water for 3 mintes and I can do some swon dives and I cude go down my slid and do the rolekoster or the skrem and all sorts ov things. I don t hava diving bord But I prtend that the later is the diving bord some times I do the backwords dive and lots ov mor
the End

When the essential thing in children's writing is to draw from within the children what they themselves think, feel, imagine and wonder, then the essential thing cannot be spelling, capital letters and punctuation. Obviously from the examples just cited, the writers — all in grade two — are already very much aware that letters are symbols of sounds, a basic concept in any language program. They are 100% competent in writing from left to right. They are aware of capital letters, end punctuation (and, therefore, sentences), many conventions of spelling, basic sentence patterns, transformations, titles, hyphens and apostrophes — not a bad start for grade two. Of course they are not yet proficient (else what are ten more years of schooling for?) but they are aware, responsive and experimenting. Furthermore, they are communicating their thoughts and feelings. How aware and responsive are we to what they have to say?

My hypothesis is that positive attention to the creative process with ample opportunity to write and tell stories and ideas will result in more competency in the skills of writing — and considerable more success and joy in the art of writing — than will the teaching of the skills *per se* in the early years. At least in the primary grades competence in mechanics seems to develop in proportion to each child's success and pleasure in writing creatively.

Kindergarten is not too soon to set our sights on the general affective goal of developing through many successful writing experiences ease and confidence in one's ability to write and a willingness to continue probing into what composing reveals about oneself and other people. If nurtured, the urge to create should persist through the middle years of school into high school and adulthood with all the attendant satisfactions and benefits that the creative process yields.

To nurture creativity in writing, the teacher must create writing situations in which every child can succeed in some respect, pose problems in which the challenges will allow for individuality, talk with the child about what the child is talking about, and recognize

and encourage that which is individual and creative. The emphasis must be on creating from within rather than recalling from without, although no one creates without recalling something. The difference is that the recall in creative situations is left to the individuality and the experiences of each child.

A primary class, for instance, has visited the zoo. If in the false name of relevance we ask the class next day to write about the visit, we know the stereotyped replies such a task will produce, most of them beginning, "The bus came at ten o'clock . . ." Going to the zoo is infinitely more fun than writing about it afterward. "What did you like best at the zoo?" may produce slightly more individuality, but it is still chiefly recall. One third grader dismissed such an assignment after a visit to a museum of natural history in four words: "The ice cream cone." If children are ever asked simply to write about a trip to the zoo, they should be asked before they go when their thoughts and feelings and hopes and imaginations are free to roam over all of the imagined possibilities.

Most elementary youngsters, who are quite at home with animals in books as well as in zoos and for whom nonsense makes sense, would surely respond to the following challenge because it appeals to the child's individual thinking, feeling and imagination. "What animal did you like best, Tom?" "The lions." "And you, Kathy?" "The monkeys." "Bobby?" "The giraffe." "What if we took half a lion — LI — and half a monkey — KEY? We'd have a LIKEY. What would a LIKEY be like? What would it do? What would it eat? What kind of a noise would it make? Or what would a MONAFFE be like? Or a GIRAKEY? Or a GIRON? What if a LIKEY and a MONAFFE ran away and joined the circus?" When the questions have no preconceived right and wrong answers, children learn to express their own individuality and indulge their creativity.

"Today we are going to brag," the teacher said to her second graders. "Imagine something that you might be or that you might do that you could brag about to the whole school." And so Joseph wrote:

> Wans I was a Jiint and I was a bad Jiint.
> I cep nocing trees doon on hoses and peppl
> diy, and wans I cot wan tree doon it fell
> doon on me I had a big fat lump on mie hed
> and I was angry that I rord and the hol
> united stats trimbld.

Are we listening? What do we hear?

Introduction:	Wans I was a Jiint
Repetition with accumulation:	and I was a bad Jiint
	(How infinitely more effective than
	"Wans I was a bad Jiint)
Drama:	I cep nocing trees doon
	on hoses and peppl diy
The camera closes in:	and wans I cot wan tree doon
Surprise:	it fell doon on me
Detail:	I had a big fat lump on mie hed
Graphics:	and I was so angry that I rord
Jiint-ness:	and the hol united stats trimbld

In fifty-seven words Joseph has created a story with a sophisticated sense of sequence and drama. He needs no exercises in beginning and closing sentences. But these are teacher satisfactions that he knows nothing about. Far more importantly, this youngster, who incidentally is underweight and near-sighted, has so effectively created a story of power that teacher and classmates can give him his own real reason for feeling proud. For a little while in his little day he experienced the equivalent of making "the hol united stats trimbl." He read his story to a first-grade class, to another second grade and to the principal of the school. Later the teacher suggested to the principal that Joseph's story be put up on the bulletin board in the main corridor. "I'd like to," said the principal, "but what will people say about the spelling?"

If spelling *were* the issue, people might marvel that a seven-year-old who could scarcely make his letters a year ago had now spelled (without thinking about spelling) 38 of the 57 words correctly by conventional adult standards, including *lump, angry* and *united.* People might say that Joseph's spelling demonstrated an almost 100% mastery of a key concept in the language program — the concept of sound/symbol correspondence, that writing is symbols for the sounds we make when we speak. Let us hope that the teacher made Joseph very proud of having sounded out j-i-int, for he would not have arrived at that spelling if he had not sounded out *giant* very slowly and distinctly. Any seven-year-old who has already noticed how to spell *angry* and *united* (for they are not "second-grade words") will soon observe the conventional way to spell *giant.*

What can we say about *Jiint*? Mount it and frame it and hang

it in the foyer for all to see and read and praise, for Joseph can write what others can read. Let us never underestimate the miracle of that moment whet it arrives or let "misspelling" ever detract from those first successes of translating sounds into readable symbols. The important thing is that a little boy now has a new means of telling the world what he is thinking and how he is feeling. Is anybody listening?

But how will children ever learn to write "correctly" if they are never "corrected"? Here is a sample of Joseph's writing in September, four months before he wrote "Wans I was a Jiint."

> hlumtedumte (Humpty Dumpty) went
> for a wauck with hiz gerl friend
> he sat

The *au* in *wauck* is a carryover from ITA in first grade, and *friend* is correct traditional orthography he has not learned from any spelling book. But both are readable — and acceptable, I hope, for the second week in second grade.

Four months after Joseph wrote "Wans I was a Jiint," he wrote this story:

> ons I saw a bunny rabbit and it was laying on the grass and it was very very very pritty and it had wight skin and had red nos and red ies and red and white ers to so then I saw this ather rabbit and it was eting his karit and it was wight with pink ies and pink ers to and it was tun to see them and then I saw this ather rabbit to it was broun with sume wight on his nec and the nexst one was a gra rabbit and that one was waking down a naro rod and I was folowing the rabbit wher ever he was going wher the rabbit was gowing to so it went down and then I kot it the end

The abrupt conclusion is attributable to the teacher's saying, "Put away your pencils now and hand in your stories. It's time for science." Even in that crisis (which occurred between *going* and *wher*) Joseph knew that his story needed a conclusion ("and then I kot it").

Although these children were using a spelling workbook as a separate phase of the language program, spelling and punctuation were

never mentioned in connection with the writing they did regularly throughout grade two. Fluency, it was felt, must precede control when children are first learning to express what they are feeling and thinking. Joseph increased his output per story from 12 words in September to 57 in January to 130+ in May. The last example shows his ability to sustain a story, to elaborate with specific details, to feel emotion ("it was fun to see them"), to diversify characters, to create the rudiments of a plot and to become involved in that plot ("and I was folowing the rabbit wher ever he was going") without ever hearing one of those technicalities mentioned. And he had really only set the stage. We will never know what adventure we were denied because at that moment it was time for science.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Evelyn M. Copeland and "The Leaflet" TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."